MARRIAGE IN HUNZA

Where a couple are definitely ill-matched, or the daughter-in-law fails to fit into the family scheme, the regrettable fact is faced, the two families meet to arrange a divorce, and each party is free to remarry and hope for better luck. Nothing, however, in our Hunza observations amazed us more than the amicable relations that normally prevailed among the women of a household. There would be a mother-in-law with three or four sons' wives, all perhaps with growing families about them, an adolescent girl or two, and the herd of youngsters. They work together from dawn to dusk without argument or recrimination, and apparently without anyone's attempting to shirk her fair share of the common tasks.

An expectant mother works on in house and field till the very last, but by common consent the heavier tasks are divided amongst the others, and an extra-nourishing ration is assigned to her both before and after the baby's birth. There is no sentimental pampering of the mother, but her immediate job is the baby, and she is expected naturally to concentrate on that. When a woman's monthly affliction overtakes her, she dresses in her oldest clothes and lies immobile by the fire till she is well again. The others make *dauda* for her, a porridge of flour well boiled in water, which is reputed very sustaining, and bring it to her, saying, "Sister, eat." After two days she is herself again, takes a bath, washes her clothes, and sweeps the house; but she is not banished as a pariah nor subject to any degrading superstitions nor to any taboo not imposed by nature.

Shyly one day my friend Zénába asked me was it true that white women were immune from monthly trouble. "We notice that English ladies seem to ride and camp at all times; we have never heard of one of you having to lie up." I explained our habits and conventions, and that we made it our pride to carry on outwardly unruffled. "But surely it can't be good for you?" "I don't believe it is; but there you are; it is our custom, and we should think it shame if the household noticed any difference in our behaviour. It sometimes makes us cross and fretful perhaps, and then our menfolk just think how unreasonable women are." She laughed heartily: "So that's how it is; we've always wondered; but I think our way is better."

2; Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

opportunity of utilizing. I should not, of course, have dreamt of offering advice or help—the reckless courage with which some travellers ply their medical ignorance has always horrified me—but I thought that some knowledge of birth-rites at home might enable me to follow Hunza procedure with more intelligence. But if an Englishman's house is his castle, the fortress-like home of the Hunzukuts is no less inviolable, and in the event I could no more have proposed to a Hunza woman to let me attend her confinement for mere scientific curiosity than I could make the same proposal to an English friend.

Like women in many other parts of the East, the Hunza woman bears her child in a crouching posture, which gives full play to her muscles—admirably developed by varied exercise and unatrophied by chair-sitting—and speeds up the period of labour. An experienced woman, usually her own mother, acts as midwife, while her husband guards the threshold and her brother the smoke-hole to prevent the intrusion of evil man or evil spirit. Within a week, as has been related, she is ready to receive visitors, and within a fortnight she is out of doors again doing light work in the fields.

There are, of course, no vital statistics available for infant or maternal mortality, but as far as my enquiries and observations extended, casualties are rare. This is not to be wondered at, since for countless generations Nature has here been at her beneficent work of weeding out inferior stocks, uninterrupted by soppy sentiment or misguided philanthropy. No C_3 girl baby can be reared in an incubator to die in childbirth or burden the community with D_4 offspring.

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

THE FIRST OF THE HARVEST

Windy weather was knocking down unripe mulberries in alarming quantities, which were incontinently guzzled by the goats and sheep.

By June 9th ripe mulberries were reported from Ganesh and Hasanabad, some hundreds of feet below us, but we had to wait another three weeks for ours.

One afternoon we were out on the hillside and stopped to watch a group of boys playing a complicated game of *bada bada* with a lot of small stones cast into twelve little holes in the ground. It was roughly equivalent to some of our games of marbles, and thinking of a large consignment of these which we had brought with us for future gifts we ruefully realized how useless marbles would be in a country where there are not six inches of smooth, level ground. As we sat trying to master the rules of *bada bada* Gulo crept up alongside me and slipped her hand confidentially into mine, whispering "Our pussy cat has had a confinement," using for fun the same term as she would have applied to her mother, and not the word suitable for cats. "There are three kittens, and they opened their eyes yesterday; do come and see them!"

When the game was over we accordingly started crosswise downhill to No. 3. I halted at the door to make sure that Zénaba was prepared to endorse the impulsive invitation. She was sitting crouched by the hearth boiling the greens for dinner and jumped up with delight to bring us in. We squatted down on a sleeping-bench, from the back of which the children produced a round fruit basket in which the cat was cosily curled up. She was evidently accustomed to seeing her babies tenderly handled, for she let us take them out without other comment than a loud purr. Dear little furry things they were, about the size of small mice, and Gulo bubbled over: "She made first the black one and then the white one and then the yellow one—and that was all." Meantime, in addition to Kanîza and Apîcho, a strange young man had drifted in to see what was going on, and presently Father arrived and we all chatted together very gaily. Laughing somewhat apologetically, Zénaba confessed that she had drawn on the emergency reserve to make some *daudo* (a sort of porridge with butter) for pussy

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to keep her strength up—and this in one of the poorest houses, where they have had no bread nor butter for themselves for weeks. *Daudo* is one of the nourishing dishes you make for a human mother, and the cat was such a pet that the kittens were considered as a birth in the family, one of the emergencies budgeted for. There is as little need in Hunza for an R.S.P.C.A. as for an anti-litter crusade. Everyone is devoted to his animals, and the children have pet names for ever[illegible]mb and kid. You will often see a boy or girl carrying home a tired animal slung over the neck like a fashionable lady's fur. Only people who have lived in the East can realize how amazing was this affectionate care for a pet; or how still more amazing this happy family life where father could come in and find his wife and daughters entertaining two strange men and be obviously delighted to see the guests. At least, if this sort of thing is possible elsewhere in the East, I have not heard of it.

When we passed next day we heard that a strange cat, which must be the only other one in Aliábád, for in general everyone is too poor to keep either cat or dog, had come in while the mother was mouse-hunting and had killed two of the kittens. Yaman, the only brother of our most beloved young friends, and most intelligent of informants, lifted a pathetic little white body with his toes from the field to show us. The children were half horrified and half amused at the kittens' fate.

There were a few wild flowers these June days amongst the scanty grass of the *toqs*: red bladder campion, stitchwort, and an occasional starved-looking forget-me-not. The children were much amused when we told them what the English call it, and that sentimentalists amongst us use it as a love-token. After that, one or another would run up to us offering a tiny blue flower and saying, "Don't forget me!" Some future linguist, language-hunting like ourselves, may be puzzled to hear of *je til akol* growing in Hunza fields and rack his brains as to how the idea came to the Karakoram. On principle we have tried to avoid poisoning the ground for future workers by importing European ideas, legends, or phrases, and in this connection the forget-me-not, the "one little pig" and Afrot's *How do you do?* are the only sins on my conscience.